

**PUBLIC ACCOUNTS COMMITTEE****FIRST REPORT**

**Shri T. N. Singh (Chandauli):** I beg to present the First Report of the Public Accounts Committee on the Appropriation Accounts (Posts and Telegraphs), 1954-55, and Audit Report 1956, Part II, and Audit Report (Posts and Telegraphs), 1957, Part I.

**CALLING ATTENTION TO MATTER  
OF URGENT PUBLIC IMPORT-  
ANCE**

**FOOD SITUATION IN WEST BENGAL**

**Shrimati Ila Palchoudhuri (Nabadwip):** Under Rule 197, I beg to call the attention of the Minister of Food and Agriculture to the following matter of urgent public importance and I request that he may make a statement thereon:—

The drought conditions prevailing in various districts of West Bengal, its repercussions on prices of foodstuffs and measures taken to cope with the situation.

**The Minister of Food and Agriculture (Shri A. P. Jain):** As I stated in the House, I have visited West Bengal to study the food situation. During my two days' stay in Calcutta, I have met the Ministers and the officials of the State Government, the representatives of the consumers' societies, traders, millers, organised industry and numerous public men. My assessment of the situation is as follows:—

In the middle of last year, parts of Bengal, in particular, the Sunderbans area had been affected by cyclone. Then, in September, 1956, followed the floods which severally affected a number of districts, in particular, Murshidabad, Nadia and Burdwan. Although, large-scale relief operations were undertaken by the State Government, yet the economic condition of these areas greatly suffered. The rabi crop in West Bengal this year was affected by rust etc. Later on, rains were belated

and owing to drought conditions, sowing and transplantation of paddy was delayed causing unemployment to agricultural workers. The recent rains, however, came as a great relief and have improved the situation. The two districts of Nadia and 24 Parganas, between themselves, have just less than half the population of displaced persons, many of whom are not fully rehabilitated. The problem of food has been aggravated by that of refugee rehabilitation. In this background it is natural that there should be suffering and the districts of Bankura, Murshidabad, Nadia and 24 Parganas have suffered most.

The Central Government had been supplying 10,000 tons of rice and 40,000 to 45,000 tons of wheat per month for consumption in West Bengal. After the ban on export of rice from Andhra became operative, the Central Government agreed to supply an additional quantity of 5,000 tons in the month of August. Although the import of rice, including paddy in terms of rice, from Andhra, Madhya Pradesh and Orissa to Calcutta has in the first eight months of this year, been of the order of 1,60,000 tons upto the end of August as compared to 96,000 tons during the financial year 1955-56 and 1,11,000 tons during 9 months from April 1956 to January 1957, the market continues to be difficult and prices rule high.

The West Bengal Government, keeping in view the overall rice position of the country, requested the Centre that they would need 80,000 tons of rice during the month of September, October and November. The State Government have a little more than 7,000 tons of the imported rice in stock and have requisitioned another 8,000 to 9,000 tons of rice from the millers, thus the total supplies available with the State Government are of the order of 15,000 to 16,000 tons. The Central Government have agreed to meet the demand of the State Government for the supply of the balance. There